

1107

A N
A N S W E R
T O
ARISTOBULUS'S
T W O L E T T E R S
T O
Dr. BENNET:

R,

A V I N D I C A T I O N of the Orthodox
and Learned Clergy of the Church of
E N G L A N D, from those Scurrilous and
Scandalous Reflections he has cast on them.

*Quousque tandem Patientiâ nostrâ abuieris,
O Aristobule?*

Cicero.

By a COUNTRY CURATE.

L O N D O N.
Printed for M. S M I T H in Cornhill.
M D C C X X I.

REVIEW OF
THE
LITERATURE





A

LETTER TO *ARISTOBULUS,*

*In Vindication of the Clergy from those
scandalous Aspersions he has cast
on them, &c.*

SIR,



S all honest well meaning People, who are Lovers of the Church and Friends to the Clergy, do justly complain of the Licentiousness of the Press; by which Infidels, who are Enemies of both, take the Liberty with their Satires

B

and

and scurrilous Invectives, to attack and defame them ; so there is no Man has given greater Occasion for such a Complaint than your self ; who, tho' I can't say you are a downright Infidel, because of the Primitive Apostolical Doctrine you pretend to revive, and the Authorities produced out of the Fathers for that Purpose ; yet have more abused the Reverend Clergy, than any profess'd Atheist has hitherto, or can do : giving us such opprobrious Language, that without Horror I can't think of, and for Shame can hardly repeat.

Whether any of our more Learned Clergy of the City or Universities, intend to take you to task and confute your old Notions and Opinions, that are so dangerous to the Church, if they should prevail, I can't tell : But I am so provoked at your foul Language, so profusely bestow'd on us, that I can no longer keep Silence ; and tho' I will not pretend to such a Conversation with the Fathers, as to be able to confront your Testimonies out of them, with others of more Weight and Number ; yet I have Reason and Abilities sufficient, without Vanity, to wipe off those Aspersions you have cast on our Order.

If none of our most Learned and Orthodox Clergy should ever write against you, purposely to overthrow your dangerous Doctrines ; yet I would not have you to please

please your self with a fond Opinion of your Performance, as if the Arguments and Authorities therein were irrefragable. Our Clergy are, many of them, well vers'd in old Authors as well as you, and were they in earnest to set about the Confutation of your Errors, (for so I will call them, notwithstanding the Apostles and Fathers of the Church are on your Side,) there is no Question but they'd do it effectually. And if they should not at all go about to confute you, there may be good and wise Reasons why they should hold their Peace: For sometimes it is better and safer to despise some Writers, than to do them the Honour of Opposition; and more prudent often to let some Notions and Opinions in Religion die and drop of themselves, if possible, than to drive them out of the Church by Controversy; and for ought I know, the Clergy in their Wisdom and Prudence intend to take this Course with your *Letters*.

You have indeed, by your reproachful and infamous Names of *Blockheads* and *Dunces* given to the best of them, done what you can to provoke them beyond all Patience, and to force them if possible, against Inclination, to shew their Learning, and make satirical Replies to you; but they are better Christians than to be put out of Temper with such Provocations,

lying upon the Truth of the Assertion of
the Poet,

— *Levius fit Patientia*
Quicquid corrigere est nefas,

Neither can you think any under the least
Obligation to answer you, excepting Dr. Ben-
net, to whom you inscribed your Letters,
and of whom too it may be said at present,

Non vacat exiguis Rebus adesse—

that he is not at Leisure to consider your
Trifles, in comparison of an Affair of much
greater Consequence (which I take Leave
to mention in Excuse for his Silence,) that
he has now upon his Hands; and that is,
to exorcise the Devil out of his Parish: For
the Doctor has declared, as I have it from
good Hands, *that the Devil is in his Parish,*
as certainly as he is in any Place of the World;
which he would not say, if he did not ex-
perimentally find so; for he is a Man of
more Meekness of Spirit, than passionately
or through a bad Habit, of which some do
accuse him, of speaking evil of others, to
utter such an Expression, if he did not
know it to be true: And the Reason that
the Doctor gives, why his Parishioners are
possess'd with the *Devil*, is such, that few
Clergy-

Clergymen will question the Truth of it, viz. their Refusal to pay such Tythes as he demands of them. And this by the by was the Reason, why the Authors of the *Delphick Oracle* said, the *Quakers* were *Servers of Satan*, which you thought was a downright Calumny; but now you may be satisfied, that there was more of Truth in that Accusation than you was aware of. For if Men that refuse the Payment of Tythes to the Parson of the Parish, be not Men of *diabolical Principles, Servers of Satan*, and possess'd with the *Devil*; the Clergy neither will, nor can in their Consciences accuse any other of that Fault or Misfortune.

How long it may be before the *Doctor* will have driven the *Devil* out of his Parishioners I can't guess; but I hope it may be soon, by the Assistance of the Lawyers, who are the best *Exorcists* in this Case; unless other Lawyers should be so perverse and cross-grain'd, as to side with the Devil and his Parishioners, and endeavour to keep him in them.

But after that the Doctor shall have finished this good Work of *Exorcism*, it is not impossible but he may take your *Letters* in Hand, and confute and confound them: For he is such a valiant Champion for the Church, and such a strenuous Impugnator of

of Popery, Heresy and Schism, and has rode in Triumph hitherto over the Papists and Dissenters, whom in the Judgment of his Friends and Admirers, he has utterly maul'd and vanquish'd ; that I believe, if either *Mahometan* or *Savage Indian* should dare to write against the Church of *England*, he'd soon lay him on his Back, and dissipate his Reasons and Arguments with all the Facility and Readiness that could be : And can you imagine that he is not as able to write against you, in Defence of the *Ministry of the Letter of the Law*, for which the Clergy of the Church of *England* are more famous and renown'd than the Priests of any other Church or Countrey, and easily vanquish you with all your Adherents for the *Ministry of the Spirit of it* ? Yes, undoubtedly he can, and was he to go about it, you'd feel the Power of his Argumentative Faculty, which he has invincibly used against others.

But supposing that Dr. *Bennet* should not think it worth his while to set about the Confutation of your *Letters*, or should account you an Author beneath his Notice ; he will lose no Reputation with his Admirers for his Silence : For no Clergyman, I hope, will think the *Quakers* the less *Heathens* or *Hereticks* for your Arguments ; and I believe the *Quakers* will not think themselves

selves the better Christians for any Thing you have wrote for them ; and I am sure it is the Interest of the Clergy not to have the less honourable Thoughts of their *Ministry of the Letter*, for the many Thousands upon Thousands of Testimonies out of the Apostles and Fathers of the Church, that you may be able to bring against it.

There is one Thing so unreasonable in you, that I must needs say, I would not advise any of our Orthodox and Learned Divines to engage with you ; and that is, you have made the Terms of Disputation so strait, as that there is no Scope of Argumentation left for your Adversary. For you have not only confined the Controversy to the Three First Ages of the Church, but have monopoliz'd and engross'd the Fathers to your self, which is not fair dealing in you. Our *Divines* don't deny, but the Apostles and Fathers of the *Ante-Nicene* Church, are the properest Judges to be appealed to in all such Controversies, where they seem not to favour either Side, or where they may be wrested and perverted on both Sides; but they are so partial, I may say, and unanimous for your Cause, that our Clergy ought not to abide the Judgment and Determination of them. If you will enlarge the Terms of Disputation, and suffer your Controversy to be try'd by

a General Council as it were, of the Writers of all Ages of the Church, I believe our Divines will enter the Lists with you; or if you will permit the Learned Commentators of this Church for this last Century, to be equal Judges with the primitive Fathers, they will not refuse to stand Tryal; for then there will be no Question, but as sure as most Votes are to carry it, you and your Cause will be baffled. And I can't see any Reason, why our modern Commentators should not know how to interpret the Scriptures as well as the Fathers, but this one, that *these* living nearer to the Apostolical Age, must needs best understand the Mind and Will of our Lord and his Apostles; which, tho' it has hitherto been reckon'd a very good Reason, yet for the Sake of our Interests and Prejudices, for the future shall be accounted a poor and bad one.

Nay, let me tell you, Sir, that the Fathers of the *Ante-Nicene* Church have lost their Honour by favouring your Cause; and you have utterly ruin'd their Reputation with our *Orthodox* Divines, by the Use you have made of them. It is well known that our Learned Clergy have hitherto paid a great Veneration to those Fathers, have look'd upon their Authority as decisive in any Controverted Point, and never quoted them

for any Opinion that they fancy'd, but with Applause and Praise: But you have perfectly turn'd our Stomachs against them all, and created in us as great an Aversion for them as we have to you: And I believe our Learned Disputers of this Age, such as Dr. *Whitby*, *Waterland*, *Whiston* and others, that shall know of your Letters, will proceed no further in their Controversy, (which was founded on the Testimony of the Fathers) since you have used the Writings of the Primitive Church, so amply and fully in Defence of a Cause and and a People, they all jointly and concurrenly bear the greatest Hatred and Detestation for. Had you made as much Use of the Fathers in Defence of *Preshytery* against *Episcopacy*, we could better have born with you and them: or had you more plentifullly cited them in Behalf of the Corruptions and Idolatry of the Church of *Rome*, you had given much less Offence to our Clergy: But to produce their Testimonies and Authorities so largely and abundantly as you have done, and can, as you say, further do, in Vindication of Quakerism, (the most despicable and odious Sect of all others) and of the allegorical Interpretation of the Law and Prophets, (an exploded and mischievous Doctrine, if it should prevail,) is so very disobliging and provoking to the Clergy, that you may depend

on't, we'll never have a good Opinion or Affection for them or you more. Good Dr. *Whitby* in his *Disquisitiones modestæ*, says, that the *Ante-Nicene* Fathers are no good Guides and Lights for the Interpretation of the Scriptures; at which some of our Orthodox Clergy were a little angry and displeased, that he did so lessen the Reputation and Authority of the Fathers, whom we had in great Honour: But we behold now more Wisdom in his Assertion than we were at first aware of: For the Doctor foresaw what others did not, that in Case the Authorities of the Fathers for the Allegorical Interpretation of the Scriptures should revive, his Expositions on the *New Testament* and all other modern Commentaries on the Scriptures must necessarily sink Price; and I hope therefore the Booksellers as well as the Clergy of this Church and Kingdom, will return their Thanks to Dr. *Whitby* for that his Assertion, and join heartily with him in Opposition to your and the Fathers *Ministry of the Spirit* of the Law and the Prophets, which, if it should prevail, would occasion as great a Fall in their Merchandise of the *Letter* as there is in *South-Sea Stock*.

But to come to the Slanders and scurrilous Reflections you have unworthily cast on our Learned and *Orthodox* Clergy. In
the

the First Place you are pleased repeatedly to say, that our Learned *Divines* understand not the Fathers; which is such a Scandal, as the like never was uttered against any Man or Order of Men whatsoever; a Scandal and Falshood that needs no Confutation, considering the Reputation that our Clergy bear at Home and Abroad for their great Learning. Surely you could not imagine, that any would believe you upon such an Accusation and Charge against us for Ignorance; but you was minded to throw the worst Dirt against us, you could pick up, and rail as much as was possible without Reason. Is it not an uncontestable Truth, that our Clergy, above others of any Nation in the World, are generally skill'd in the Languages, in which the Fathers wrote? and do they not read, study, and translate them to Admiration; which is impossible for them to do, if they did not understand them? It must be confess'd indeed, that the Authors of the *Delphick Oracle*, those *most Learned Scholars of our most Famous Universities*, who so egregiously blunder'd about the Sense of *Tertullian* as cited by them, do not understand the Fathers; but that is no Objection against all other Clergymen. And it must be acknowledged, that none of our *Divines* comprehend the mystical Theology, Tro-

pology, and Mythology of the Fathers; neither can they interpret the Law and Prophets by Visions, Similitudes, Allegories and Allusions, which you do, as you have been taught by *Barnabas*, *Hermas*, *Clemens*, *Justin Martyr*, *Origen*, St. *Cyprian*, *Eusebius* and the rest of them; but no Body can surely infer from thence, that they don't cape the Sense of those Writers. Our Divines are certainly, many of them, notable and excellent at *Grammar* and *Syntax*; and as sure as they can find out the *principal Verb* in any Sentence of the Fathers, they know how to put the *Nominative Case* before, and the *Accusative* after it in order to Construction: And if they should mistake the proper Signification of a Word, that's a Thing so common now-a-Days with the best Philologers, that it will be no great Fault in them. Moreover, I don't think there is any obvious Piece of Divinity in all the Fathers, that is, any plain Exhortation to the Practice of a moral Duty, which our Learned Clergy don't apprehend the full Import of; so that your Charge against them for Ignorance, or Want of Understanding the Fathers, is a downright Calumny.

But what is strange and astonishing in you, Sir, is, that after you have abused the Clergy in general for Ignorance of the Fathers,

you

you please your self with the Hopes of a Doctor's Degree, by *Diploma* from the University of Oxford, as an honorary Reward of your Skill in them. If your Friends had so little Wit, as to put such Thoughts and Hopes into your Head; you might have had more than to give Heed to them. That University (which, by the by, you would render infamous for *Bulls* and *Blunders*) knows better how to distinguish Men of Worth and Merit, than to do you that Honour. And you might easily have known of your self, had you not been blind and self-conceited, that your Letters to Dr. *Bennet*, would sooner provoke the Displeasure of the Members of that University, than procure their Favour. Have you not reflected upon the Clergy in general, as so many useless *Drones* and *Blockheads*; and given them, God knows what opprobrious Language, the like never was cast on them by their greatest Enemies? And do you think the *Oxonians* are not sensible, that they are concluded under such Reflections? A Man for his Skill in the Fathers is deserving of Favour and Respect, if he shew it consistently with the Interest and Honour of the Church and Clergy. And that University has such a Veneration for the Fathers, that whoever should strenuously urge their Authority for the Advance-
ment

ment of Ecclesiastical Grandeur, should be highly complimented and careſ'd by her; otherwise you may be ſure, ſhe'll be againſt the Fathers as much as againſt any other Heathen, Heretical, or Atheiſtical Authors whatſoever: And why ſhould ſhe not? For as moſt Men are againſt Reaſon, if Reaſon be againſt them; ſo if the Fathers of the Primitive Church, and the Doctoſs of the preſent Church, interfere in their Principles and Interests, it is certain that the latter will reſoluteſly oppoſe and contradicſt the former.

Neither will your *High-Church* Principles be any better Recommenſation of you to that University for a Doctor's Degree. *Oxford* has indeed, to her Praife, a ſingular Reſpect for *High-Churchmen*; but they are of another Sort than ſuch as you, who are for *the Mountain of the Lord's House or Church being exalted on the Top of the Mountains*, in the ſenſe of the Prophet and Fathers of the Church; which Exaltaſion or *Ædification* of the Church of Christ they will oppoſe to the utmoſt, as it becomes the Interest and Principles of all thoſe, who are for founding their Church on the *Dirt* and *Sand* of the Letter, as you call it. Don't then flatter your ſelf with the Hopes of the famous University of *Oxford*'s taking any Notice of you; muſh leſſ

less that she should do you (who for your Principles will bring Dishonour to that Learned Body) the Honour of a Doctor's Degree *Gratis*; so far from it, that I verily believe, they would sooner stop your Grace for that Degree, if you otherwise had a legal Title and Qualification for it.

On the other Hand, your Companions finding your blind Side, do but banter you when they smooth you up with the Expectations of the *Regius Professorship of Cambridge*. That University has properer Persons of her own Body; than you are, to confer that Preferment on. Tho' none of them may be comparably so well vers'd in the Fathers as your self; yet they have other more requisite Qualifications: and I never as yet heard that Skill in the Fathers was required in a *Regius Professor*, or Dr. *James* and many of his Predecessors were unfit for that Office. The grand Qualification of a *Regius Professor* is, to my Apprehension, *Polemical Divinity*, which you can't pretend to; but Dr. *Waterland* has made it appear by his Writings, that he hath a *wangling* Talent, and consequently deserves to be preferr'd to that Post before you. Was you to be advanced to the *Professor's Chair*, you'd soon make a *Sine-Cure* of it, more than your Predecessors have, and would tell them that all their Disputations were

de Land Caprinâ, and of no Use or Edification to the Hearers: And if you should read Divinity Lectures, you'd do it in the Way of *Origen's Homilies*, *Clemens Romanus's Recognitions*, *Clemens Alex. Stromata*, *Hermas's Visions* and *Pastorals*, and such like Stuff; which the University has no Taste of, being long accustomed to, what you'd call, the Split-Text Divinity of their former Professors, who,

— *Longis Rationibus assēm
In centum discunt Partes diducere.* —

But I had lik'd to have burst with laughing at your solemn Declarations, that you have no ambitious Aims at the Archiepiscopal Palace at *Lambeth*, neither do you write to court any Preferments in this Church; you might have spared your self the Pains of such Declarations, till Preferments were offer'd you; and I don't believe that any Ecclesiastical or Lay-Patron will think you worthy of any, unless you could write better in Defence of the Excellency of the Constitution of our Church according to the Primitive Pattern than you have done.

You may please your self with the Thoughts of the Protection and Encouragement of our venerable Bishops in the Prose-

Prosecution of your Undertaking, to demonstrate that *the Law is spiritual*; but I can assure you, that the Bishops are no more Friends to that Doctrine of the Apostle in the Sense of your famous *Origen*, than the subordinate Clergy. Tho' they are *Spiritual Peers* by the Law of the Land, yet as to the Law of *Moses*, in the Opinion of *Origen*, they are *carnally minded*, and are as much for the *Death*, that is, in your Sense, the *Letter* of the Law and the Prophets, as any of us all; and will as certainly as any body oppose the *Spiritual* or Allegorical Interpretation of the Scriptures, which in my Apprehension would be as dangerous to their Honours and Dignities, as to the Interests of us the poorer Parsons, Vicars, and Curates.

There is but one Bishop that you can in the least hope for as a Friend to your Cause, and he is the Bishop of *Bangor*, who has indeed, without his Knowledge of the Fathers, preach'd for one of your primitive Principles of *an absolutely free and unlimited Toleration of Religion*, without any Ecclesiastical Oaths, Articles, Subscriptions, or other Impositions upon the Conscience: But even that good Bishop is not so much of your Mind, as you and his Enemies may imagine. Tho' he has preach'd for such a Toleration in as express Terms seemingly,

as the Sense of Words can bear ; yet if you'll allow him to be the best Interpreter of his own Meaning, (which is but reasonable in the Case of Ambiguities) he did not aim at such a Toleration of Religion, as his Enemies would persuade the World to believe of him. He has brought himself off by Restrictions and Limitations (which some call Absolute-Lys and Positive-Lys) that shew he's for no more extensive Toleration than most of his Brethren. And moreover, if Men's Actions and Practice be proper Interpreters of their Words and Meaning, he could not intend an unlimited Toleration ; for no Man is readier than himself, to subjugate his Conscience to Ecclesiastical Impositions, nor forwarder to impose them on the Clergy of his *Dioceſe* ; and there is no Question but for a Translation to a wealthier Bishoprick, he'd conform to the Oaths, Declarations and Subscriptions required, as soon as any other whatsoever : So that you can no more think of his Friendship, than any others of his Order ; and were the Bishops as well as the inferior Clergy, whom you call ignorant hot-headed Priests, to manifest their dislike of your Principles and Design, none can blame them ; when you strike at the very Foundation of *their* Interests and Ministry, as well as ours.

You say, Sir, that was you at *Rome*, *Paris*, or in *Spain*; the Pope and his Cardinals, the Doctors of the *Sorbonne*, and the Inquisitors themselves would encourage your Undertaking, applaud it, and punish him for an Heretick, that should find fault with it: But I can assure you, you are much mistaken; for it is manifest enough that the *Romish* Clergy are for the *Ministry of the Letter*, against Liberty of Conscience, and more for Ecclesiastical Tyranny and Grandeur than Protestants; and I don't doubt but they'd trounce you, if you was among them, for reviving such Primitive and Apostolical Notions of the *Ministry of the Spirit of the Law of Moses*. The Papists indeed have a greater Veneration for the Apostles and Fathers of the Church than we Protestants pretend to; for they worship them, and pray to them, which we do not: But were their Eyes open to behold what Doctrines the Apostles and Fathers advance, as you have represented them; I don't question, but they'd not only blot their Names out of their *Calendar* of Saints, but establish their Church on another Authority than that of St. *Peter*, *Hermas*, *Clemens*, and others their first Popes. But if it be your Opinion, that the Papists would encourage your Work, I wish you was amongst them for the Experiment,

as the Sense of Words can bear ; yet if you'll allow him to be the best Interpreter of his own Meaning, (which is but reasonable in the Case of Ambiguities) he did not aim at such a Toleration of Religion, as his Enemies would persuade the World to believe of him. He has brought himself off by Restrictions and Limitations (which some call Absolute-Lys and Positive-Lys) that shew he's for no more extensive Toleration than most of his Brethren. And moreover, if Men's Actions and Practice be proper Interpreters of their Words and Meaning, he could not intend an unlimited Toleration ; for no Man is readier than himself, to subjugate his Conscience to Ecclesiastical Impositions, nor forwarder to impose them on the Clergy of his *Dioceſe* ; and there is no Question but for a Translation to a wealthier Bishoprick, he'd conform to the Oaths, Declarations and Subscriptions required, as soon as any other whatsoever : So that you can no more think of his Friendship, than any others of his Order ; and were the Bishops as well as the inferior Clergy, whom you call ignorant hot-headed Priests, to manifest their dislike of your Principles and Design, none can blame them ; when you strike at the very Foundation of *their* Interests and Ministry, as well as *ours*.

You say, Sir, that was you at *Rome*, *Paris*, or in *Spain*; the Pope and his Cardinals, the Doctors of the *Sorbonne*, and the Inquisitors themselves would encourage your Undertaking, applaud it, and punish him for an Heretick, that should find fault with it: But I can assure you, you are much mistaken; for it is manifest enough that the *Romish Clergy* are for the *Ministry of the Letter*, against Liberty of Conscience, and more for Ecclesiastical Tyranny and Grandeur than Protestants; and I don't doubt but they'd trounce you, if you was among them, for reviving such Primitive and Apostolical Notions of the *Ministry of the Spirit* of the Law of *Moses*. The Papists indeed have a greater Veneration for the Apostles and Fathers of the Church than we Protestants pretend to; for they worship them, and pray to them, which we do not: But were their Eyes open to behold what Doctrines the Apostles and Fathers advance, as you have represented them; I don't question, but they'd not only blot their Names out of their *Calendar* of Saints, but establish their Church on another Authority than that of St. *Peter*, *Hermas*, *Clemens*, and others their first Popes. But if it be your Opinion, that the Papists would encourage your Work, I wish you was amongst them for the Experiment,

riment, that our Church might be no more disturb'd with your Allegorical, Spiritual, Mystical and whimsical Interpretations of the Scriptures, to the disquietude of the Minds of the Clergy, who for fear of your Visions and Similitudes,

*Irritat, mulcet, vanis terroribus angit
Pectus, ut Magus. —*

Again, you seemingly make a Jest and Scoff at the Title of *Orthodox*, when given to the Clergy of our Church; but I can assure you, that as certainly as our Church is the Purest and best constituted Church, (a Title of Honour she has long assumed to herself) in the whole World, her Clergy are consequently the most *Orthodox*. Possibly such as you may think our Church a Limb, and a very corrupt one too, of the *Whore of Babylon*, and perhaps you may be fraught with Arguments and Testimonies out of the Fathers to prove it, because of the Confusion and Disorder she is in: But none of our Protestant Divines were ever of your Mind, but always asserted either the *Pope* himself, or the Church of *Rome*, to be the *great Whore*. And our Clergy, I say, are certainly as *Orthodox*, as our Church is a pure and incorrupt one; against whose Orthodoxy you have no Objection but the

In-

Inconsistency, Incoherence, Difference; and Uncertainty of their Faith and Principles; which is no Argument of their being *Heterodox*; or what must we think of the eminent Divines that have adorn'd this Church for this last Century? We always reckon'd such great Men as Bishop *Stillingfleet*, *Patrick*, *Sprat*, *Burnet*, *Sherlock*, *South* and many others I could name, *Orthodox* Divines, and the Ornament of our Church; who, tho' they were a little inconsistent with themselves, and in Prudence addicted to a Change of their Principles with every Turn of the Times, yet may be accounted *sound* and *staunch* Men for all that. And would the Modesty of our present venerable Fathers of the Church, and other Reverend Divines, such as Dr. *Clark*, *Bennet*, *Sacheverel*, *Ibbot*, *Sherlock*, *Whitby*, *Waterland* and many others, bear to hear of their Praises, I coul'd prove them to be the Glory of our Times for *Orthodoxy*, notwithstanding the Strife and Variance that is amongst them, and the Contradiction of Spirit they may be of. Are not all our Clergy to a Man hearty for the Rights and Revenues of the Church? Do not they hold one Faith or other in *Christ*, excepting some that may be suspected of Infidelity? What greater Proof therefore would you have or desire of their *Orthodoxy*? Are they not against the Worship

Worship of dumb Idols ? Are they not averse to the Idolatry of the Church of *Rome* ? And tho' some of the venerable Bench, as well as their Inferiors may be taken upon Suspicion for *Covetousness*, which St. *Paul* calls *Idolatry*; and tho' some others of the Clergy may be accused of making their *Belly a God*, because of the Debts they have contracted through an Indulgence of their Appetite; yet none of their Hearers and Followers, I hope, will think them the less *Orthodox* for such small Failings. And for an absolute Demonstration of the *Orthodoxy* of our Clergy, I dare venture to affirm, that were they all assembled in Convocation, they would unanimously agree in the Condemnation of your Principles.

But, as it comes into my Head upon this Occasion of vindicating the *Orthodoxy* of our Clergy, I can't but wonder how you came by your fond Notion of *Nebuchadnezzar's Image* being a Figure of Christ's Church of all Ages. Did you take this Notion up of your self, or did any others of the Ancients teach it you ? Or did you vent it on purpose to make the World think you have attain'd to the Wisdom that St. *John* speaks of, of knowing both *the Beast and his Image* ? Possibly the Apostle, who speaks of the Apostacy of the latter Times ; and the Fathers, such as St. *Cyprian, Origen,* and

and others, who beforehand have intimated a gradual Defection of the Church from the Truth and Piety of her first Ages ; and perhaps the ancient Poets and Mythologists, who borrow'd, as you say, their Mythology from the Jews, and who make such a fanciful Distinction of several Ages, by the Emblems of Gold, Silver, Brass, and Iron, might put such a Conception into your Head concerning the several Periods of Christ's Church : But our modern Divines, such as Dr. Hackvil in his *Apology for the Providence of God*, and Dr. Wotton in his *Essay on Ancient and Modern Learning*, have confuted your Notion ; and abundantly proved, that the Theology of the present Times does transcend the Ancients. Horace indeed says,

*Ætas Parentum peior Avis tulit
Nos nequiores* —

Which was most true with respect to the Old Romans, as is manifest to any one conversant in the History of the Roman State from the Foundation of the City ; in which he may discern a gradual Declension, and Change for the worse in the Morals and Principles of that renown'd People : But no body can have the same Thoughts of the Church of Christ, that considers the Wisdom,

dom, Piety, Probity, Integrity, Faith, and what not divine and human Graces of the present Times beyond the preceding, which is entirely owing to the good Examples of our Clergy, the Abundance of their Preaching, and the Orthodoxy of their Principles. So then I will never believe your Notion of *Nebuchadnezzar's Image*, till the Philosopher's Stone, as you call it, or Touchstone of Truth, *bewn out of the Mountains* of the sublime Sense of the Law and the Prophets, has made a Dissolution of it, and shewn us nicely the Head, Arms, Body, Thighs, Legs, Feet and Toes of Christ's Church, and accurately distinguished between the Gold, Silver, Brass, Iron and Clay of the various Ages of it.

But to return to your Slanders of the Clergy: Who is not mov'd with Indignation against you, charging the Authors of the *Delphic Oracle* with the greatest Calumny and Defamation, that Men, Scholars, or Christians can be guilty of, for calling the *Quakers* Heathens, Blasphemers, and Servers of Satan; when you your self give more opprobrious Language to the *Clergy*, calling them *Baal's Priests*, blind Guides, Worshippers of the Beast, and Servers of Antichrist; which, in my Opinion, is more railing Accusation: and I appeal to our honest Churchmen, who are Friends of the *Clergy*,

Clergy, and Enemies of the Quakers, whether you ben't the greatest Slanderer. I don't care to threaten you, neither am I willing to give you the Trouble to prove your Words : But was you, as well as the Authors of the *Delphick Oracle*, to be put into the Ecclesiastical Court for *Scandal*, I don't doubt but the Equitable Judges of that Court, would after a tedious and impartial and expensive Tryal, without Respect of Persons, acquit the Authors of the *Delphick Oracle*, and find you Guilty ; or they would not be trusty Friends of the Church, and faithful to their own Interest.

But your grandest and most shameful Slander on the Clergy, is your calling us (im- plicitely) the *Black Guards of Hell*, for which you have no Authority but *Origen* and the Fathers ; in which Slander you have exceedingly surpass'd all the Enemies of our Church and Priesthood ; and you might as well have call'd us *Pluto's Liverymen*, and for ought I know, the Fathers would have born you out in it. It must be confess indeed, that if *Origen's* Opinion (in which you say others concur) about the Kingdom of Heaven and Hell be true, we are not undeservedly branded with that odious Title; for in his Sense, *we have taken away the Key of Knowledge, and will neither our selves, nor suffer others, to enter into the Kingdom*

of Heaven. And many of us begin to suspect that the Kingdom of Heaven, concerning which our Saviour has delivered so many Parables, must have another signification than that we have hitherto dreamt of. But since we have fram'd to our selves a Notion of Heaven and Hell, we will stick to it, tho' we know not where either is, nor does any body but Mr. *Whiston* know how far, and how long a Journey it is, that the Soul after her Departure from the Body takes to them. Of our Hell we can't be said to be the *Black Guards*, tho' we are for consigning all those, whose Principles we dont like, to it; and differ much in our Opinion, who shall be Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. If you would have my Judgment in the Case, I think that no *Quakers*, for want of Baptism, or, what you call the Enchantment of sprinkling with Water, and crossing, can be saved; and as I believe all Hereticks and Infidels, will go to Hell; so I must own that, if you can prove the *Ministry of the Letter* the greatest Heresy and Cause of Infidelity, the Priesthood of these Ages are in a dangerous Case. In the mean time, tho' we are against the Kingdom of Heaven in your Sense, yet your Slander of us for being the *Black Guards of Hell* is of the deepest Dye.

To be plain then with you; Sir, you have given great Offence to the Clergy, and have endeavoured to the utmost of your Power, to bring our Order and Office into Disreputation and Contempt among the People. Whether you think of making Reparation for the Injury done us, I cant tell; but it becomes you so to do. And if you are desirous of regaining our Favour and Friendship, you must undertake some Work, to be illustrated out of the Writings of the Primitive Church, that shall tend to the Honour and Interest of the Clergy. If you'll give me Leave to impose a Penance and Task on you; it should be to write in Defence of the Divine Right of Tithes, under which you must amply prove, by Testimonies of the Fathers, that the Laiety of whatsoever Denomination, are *Robbers of God*, and of his Royal Priesthood, the Clergy, if they withhold such Tithes and Offerings, as are at any time demanded of them: Such a Work well perform'd would reconcile you and the Fathers to our Friendship, and we would certainly promote the Sale of it, to your Honour and Profit, as we would be willing to inculcate the Principles contain'd in it.

We don't desire you by way of Retraction to go about the proving the *Orthodoxy* of the Clergy, which is manifest enough to

our Hearers and Admirers, notwithstanding our Contention about it, and the Dislike that many of us bear to the Articles of Religion we swear and subscribe to : Neither need you prove the *Ministry of the Letter*, to be the true Ministry of the New Testament, so long as our Flocks , knowing nothing to the contrary, take us for real Ambassadors of Christ Jesus : Neither need you demonstrate the Certainty of our Discipleship of Christ, which is apparent enough by the Love that we bear to one another ; and particularly to those who hold Principles injurious to our Trade. Neither would I have you to commend us for understanding the *Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven* ; which indeed we don't pretend to, tho' we believe, many of us, certain Mysteries that no Man understands, and are angry at those that are not of the same Faith with us. Nor lastly, am I for putting you upon the Proof of the Excellency of the Constitution of our Church according to the Primitive Pattern, which our People may easily be kept in the Belief of, if such as you don't blab out the Truth to them. None of these Things are we for imposing upon you ; but a Demonstration of the Divine Right of Tithes, is what we have most at Heart, and would be very useful to us in this loose and degenerate Age, in which the People are for

for defrauding the *Parson* as well as the *King* of his just Dues. And I am of opinion, that Dr. *Bennet* would be reconcil'd to you at this Juncture, for the Need that he stands in of such a Work, and almost forgive you the Injury done to his Reputation by the Learning of your Letters ; whereby some ignorant People may be apt to imagine that he's nonplus'd, and his Disputatious Faculty quite quell'd and silenced. If this Task should not be very agreeable to your *Genius*, yet why may not you strive to write, as well as we *Parsons* are forc'd to believe, swear, and subscribe against the Grain ? What don't we do for our Interest ? And what should not you do to regain our Friendship ?

I hear indeed, by the by, that you have rather an Inclination to give the Words of the Prophet about *Robbing God in Tithes and Offerings* a quite different Turn, and to shew that the Priests or Ministers of the Letter, are the *Robbers of God and his People* by exacting Tithes and Offerings of them for their Ministry, which is of less worth than nothing ; and that having found out the Way of entring in at the Strait Gate into the Fold of Christ, you'll prove us to be the Thieves and Robbers that climb up another way into it : But I hope you'l consider the Danger of such an Attempt before
you

you go about it, which will move the Indignation of the Clergy more than you may be aware of, who will not suffer themselves to be so nearly attack'd in their Interests, without meditating such a Resentment as will not be pleasing to you. Nay, it is reported that you are minded to prefer a *Bill* of Indictment against us upon this Statute of *Moses*, *Thou shalt not Steal*, and pretend to bring the Fathers as Witnesses against us, for the Breach of that Statute ; and as you please your self with the Advantage of the *Lord C. J. King*, who is skill'd in the Fathers, under whom we are to be try'd; so you hope to get us transported for *Felony*, which you think will turn to the Ease and Relief of the People of this oppress'd Nation. But by the help of our God (you almost put me into a Passion) if you offer at any such thing, you shall fare the worse for't : Not that we are apprehensive of Transportation, or are unwilling to abide a Tryal. Tho' you may bring such Witnesses as *Origen* and the Rest of the Fathers, to prove that we have turn'd the Church into a *Den of Thieves*, and that we get our Living by *Robbery*; yet we have living Witnesses at hand, to invalidate their Testimony, such as *Monsieur Le Clerc*, *Dr. Davis*, and others, who will prove the Fathers to be Triflers, and Men of no Credit; neither do I think there

there is a rich Ecclesiastick of this Kingdom, or other Dependant on the Church, that will not appear in behalf of the Clergy, to the Disreputation and Disparagement of the Evidence of your Fathers. I can't imagine what is the Ground of your Enmity and Spleen against us *Parsons*, that you should thus meditate our Ruin. Can you think it at all for the Interest and Advantage of the Subject, that we were banish'd ? Have we not to the utmost of our Power opposed the Growth of Infidelity, and stopp'd the Torrent of Vice and Impiety, which otherwise like a Deluge would overwhelm this Kingdom, and bring it into a deplorable Condition for Irreligion, without us ?

Mr. Oldmixon, indeed, as I remember, in his History of the *West Indies*, speaks of a Country without either *Physicians*, *Lawyers*, or *Parsons*; and yet the Inhabitants, who were Christians, thought their Bodies, Souls, and Estates in as good Safety as any that abounded most with such *Cattle*: upon which such as you would be apt to cry out,

O fortunatos nimium, bona si sua nōrint !

But I'm of Opinion that these Three Professions are of great Use to our Nation. No body will say that *Physicians* are useless, but the Country People who have no Money

Money to fee them with, and enjoy as good Health and long Life without them. Much less will any speak against the Use of *Lawyers*, who teach People to practise the most excellent Graces of Forbearance and For-givenesses one of another; *to take Wrong, to suffer themselves to be defrauded, and to part with Cloak and Coat too*, rather than litigiously contest a Right to either: And tho' the Country may be full of Complaints of the Oppressions of these Men, and of their exorbitant Fees for no equivalent Work done, and think them but a little better Defence of their Clients than a *Hawk of a Pigeon*; yet I'm of Opinion that they are useful *Limbs* of the Body Politick, otherwise the Legislative Authority of this Kingdom, which is celebrated for its Wisdom and Justice, would take care of the Amputation of them, and provide better for the Security of Men's Rights, and the easier Determination of *Law-Suits*. But the Use of the Clergy is so great and unquestionable, that I know not where to begin to speak of the Advantages that accrue to the People by them. Tho' they are Authors of most of the Distractions and Confusions in the Kingdom; yet some way or other, not now to be mention'd, they make abundant Compensations for those Mischiefs. Tho' they preach not, in your Sense, *the Mysteries of the*

the Kingdom of Heaven, nor understand them ; yet, to the best of their Abilities, they entertain their Congregations with a Tale out of their Pulpits, to the Amusement of their Ears and Understandings. And was our *Craft* to be supprest as well as *Stock-jobbing*, and the Ministry of the Gospel left to those *that should be call'd of God as was Aaron* ; tho' the People in general might rejoice at such a Release from Tithes, yet we and our Families and Dependants would be great Losers.

I do remember also to have read somewhere, of a Prophecy of the Acceptable Year of the Lord, when Deliverance to the Captives of *Babylon* will be preach'd, when the Eyes of the blind in Understanding will be open to see their Errors, and when every Yoke of Oppression will be unloos'd from the Necks of Mankind : But we are willing to think that *Tithes*, which we call the Rights of the Church, are not one of those Yokes ; otherwise it is to be fear'd, that as the nearest and dearest Relations must once part, so we must some time bid adieu to our Church and her Rights too.

And we do believe too there is a Time to come, which we *Parsons* sometimes speak of in our Pulpits, of an universal Peace, when the *Lyon shall lie down with the Lamb*, and when *Men shall beat their Swords into*

Money to see them with, and enjoy as good Health and long Life without them. Much les will any speak against the Use of *Lawyers*, who teach People to practise the most excellent Graces of Forbearance and For-givenesses one of another ; *to take Wrong, to suffer themselves to be defrauded, and to part with Cloak and Coat too*, rather than litigiously contest a Right to either : And tho' the Country may be full of Complaints of the Oppressions of these Men, and of their exorbitant Fees for no equivalent Work done, and think them but a little better Defence of their Clients than a *Hawk of a Pigeon* ; yet I'm of Opinion that they are useful *Limbs* of the Body Politick, otherwise the Legislative Authority of this Kingdom, which is celebrated for its Wisdom and Justice, would take care of the Amputation of them, and provide better for the Security of Men's Rights, and the easier Determination of *Law-Suits*. But the Use of the Clergy is so great and unquestionable, that I know not where to begin to speak of the Advantages that accrue to the People by them. Tho' they are Authors of most of the Distractions and Confusions in the Kingdom ; yet some way or other, not now to be mention'd, they make abundant Compensations for those Mischiefs. Tho' they preach not, in your Sense, *the Mysteries of*

the Kingdom of Heaven, nor understand them ; yet, to the best of their Abilities, they entertain their Congregations with a Tale out of their Pulpits, to the Amusement of their Ears and Understandings. And was our *Craft* to be supprest as well as *Stock-jobbing*, and the Ministry of the Gospel left to those that should be call'd of God as was Aaron ; tho' the People in general might rejoice at such a Release from Tithes, yet we and our Families and Dependants would be great Losers.

I do remember also to have read somewhere, of a Prophecy of the Acceptable Year of the Lord, when Deliverance to the Captives of *Babylon* will be preach'd, when the Eyes of the blind in Understanding will be open to see their Errors, and when every Yoke of Oppression will be unloos'd from the Necks of Mankind : But we are willing to think that *Tithes*, which we call the Rights of the Church, are not one of those Yokes ; otherwise it is to be fear'd, that as the nearest and dearest Relations must once part, so we must some time bid adieu to our Church and her Rights too.

And we do believe too there is a Time to come, which we *Parsons* sometimes speak of in our Pulpits, of an universal Peace, when the *Lyon* shall lie down with the *Lamb*, and when Men shall beat their Swords into

Plow-shares, and their Spears into Pruning-Hooks, neither shall they learn War any more; which will be such a blessed State of the World, that none but *Knaves* who live by Plunder, Rapine and Violence can be averse to it : And it is to be hop'd that such a happy Scene of Affairs may descend upon the Church without any Prejudice or Disreputation to our Office and Interest. We don't deny, but some of the Principles of the *Quakers* have a direct Tendency to the Advancement of that glorious State and Condition of Mankind; but if after all, God should declare himself on the side of *that* People, I have only this to say, that the great Doctors of our Church have been at University, have study'd Divinity, and tumbled over abundance of Authors to no Purpose.

Thus, Sir, have I fully answered the Calumnies and opprobious Language given to our *Orthodox* and learned Divines, in your Two Letters to Dr. *Bennet*. When you said, None of the subordinate Clergy were any more able to write against you like Scholars, than so many *Chimney-Sweepers* that never read Books, you little imagined that a *Country Curate* could have thus handled you. It is not to be expected that I should take your Learning to Task, and quote Fathers or other ancient Authors against

against you. We *Country Parsons* are such Strangers to the Fathers, that not one in a Hundred, ever heard of the Names of them. Our Conversation lies altogether in a few modern *Orthodox* Writers, which we stuff our Heads with, and out of which we provide a slender Entertainment for our Flocks every Lord's Day: Neither do we think it any more useful and necessary for us to be acquainted with the Writers of the Primitive Church, than to feed our Congregations with *Crumbs of Greek and Latin*. But, tho' I have not presumed to meddle with the Learned Part of your Controversy; yet I hope the Laity will not question, but we have Doctors in Divinity enough, so well vers'd in the Ancients, as to be able to confront you with Reason and Authority, to the Overthrow of your Undertaking, if they would in earnest go about it. There is one great *Doctor* of our Church, namely Dr. *Frankland*, a Preacher at *Bristol*, and *Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty*, that knows, to a Nicety, the Shallowness of your Head, and *scantling* of your Learning, who has given the World Reason to hope for a notable Performance against you. You perhaps in your contemptuous Way of treating the Clergy, may think that *Doctor* no more of a Scholar, than a *Monkey* is of a Man; and may account him no

other among the Learned, than as a *Goose* among *Swans*; saying of him,

— *Argutos Anser strepit inter Olores.*

But when his Lucubrations come forth to the Confutation of your Errors, all Men will stand in Admiration of his Learning; and if *Nat. Hough of Kensington*, will but assist him in Orthography, he'll undoubtedly acquit himself like a great Scholar. If you'll but wait the Publication of his Learned Dissertation, I dare say, you'll never write more; and there is this Reason to expect an extraordinary *Treatise* from him, to shew that his Oral Invectives against you are not ill grounded; otherwise he knows, you'll with Justice take an Advantage against him, to expose his Ignorance, Malice and Perfidiousness, under the blackest and most odious Characters that may be.

But hold, now I think on't again, if neither he, nor any other Doctor of our Church attempt learnedly to confute you, you are not to conclude it their Inability to do it, but Prudence to keep Silence. There are too many Controversies already on Foot, to the Grief of all good Christians; and it is fit that some of them be laid asleep, before we engage in any fresh ones; and if we should kindle or commence a Disputation

putation, like a War or Fire, with you, who knows but it may end, such is the Nature of your Principles, in the Confusion or Peace of the whole Church.

You have done your utmost, as I observed before, to draw our Learned Doctors into Battel with you: You have challenged them, set them at Defiance, and pronounced them ignorant *Blockheads*, which is enough to provoke Men of the most cowardly and pusillanimous Spirit to try their Strength: But the Friends of our Church and Clergy will, I hope, rather account it the Excellency of their Christian Temper, to forgive and pass by such Provocations and Affronts than contend with you.

But till our Doctors shall be better disposed, and at Leisure, than they seem to be at present to write against you; there is another and more proper Method to be taken with you, and that is, by making such Reports and Representations of you and your Letters among the People, as in their Wisdom and Prudence they shall see fit. The Reputation of the Clergy among the Populace for Honesty, Sincerity, Truth and Justice, (excepting the Lies and Frauds that we sometimes accuse one another of in Print) is so great, that, if we should report any Thing of you a little bordering upon

upon Slander, they will easily receive and swallow it. The Priests of the Church of *Rome* have reap'd great Advantages by their *pious Frauds*; and if we should use a little Artifice for the Support of our Holy Mother the Church of *England*, where's the Blame of it? The *Craftsmen* of *Ephesus* being apprehensive of the Danger of the Worship of *Diana* from the Preaching of the Apostles, extolled her to the Skies against them, and good Reason they had for it, because they had their Wealth by her; and rather than our Church, like another Goddess of the Wilderness, shall undergo Peril from you and your Fathers, we'll magnify her at any Rate, as it becomes all those who grow rich and fat by her.

To conclude Sir, let me advise you to publish no more in Defence of that obsolete Doctrine of the *Spirituality* of the Law of *Moses*; and remember that I have favourably, yea, too tenderly treated you for your ill Usage of the *Clergy*. If you vent any more scurrilous Reflections on them for Want of Learning and Orthodoxy, you must expect to be handled with more Sharpness and Severity.

I don't conceal my Name from you, thro' any Apprehensions I am under of your acute Reply to my Disreputation and Dishonour; neither would I value it of a Rush
on

on that Account, if you knew who I am. But the Reason why I chuse to be concealed is downright Modesty, not only to avoid the Applauses, Thanks and Congratulations of the Clergy, and the Two Universities for this *good Service* done to the Church; but to take off all Suspicions of ambitious Aims at Preferment in Recompence for it. Was I publickly known, no doubt, but Dr. *Bennet* and Dr. *Frankland*, of whom I have made honourable Mention, would be profuse in their Promises to me against the Time of their being made Bishops; and it is not impossible but the Bishop of *Bangor* might make me his Chaplain, for which I should not be thought, in the Opinion of his Lordship, the less qualified for Want of Acquaintance with the Fathers, so long as I had Learning enough to see to the Examination of a *Welch Levite* according to the Canon. But as I had no such worldly Ends in View upon the Publication of this Work, so my Reward for it lies in the Comfort and Satisfaction of having done Service to our Holy Mother the Church of *England*, whom you represent as an adulterous Woman, and her Reverend Sons the Clergy as a spurious, illegitimate, ignorant and dull Brood.

So, Sir, leaving you to chew upon this Letter, which will hardly be acceptable to your

upon Slander, they will easily receive and swallow it. The Priests of the Church of *Rome* have reap'd great Advantages by their pious Frauds ; and if we should use a little Artifice for the Support of our Holy Mother the Church of *England*, where's the Blame of it ? The *Craftsmen* of *Ephesus* being apprehensive of the Danger of the Worship of *Diana* from the Preaching of the Apostles, extolled her to the Skies against them, and good Reason they had for it, because they had their Wealth by her ; and rather than our Church, like another Goddess of the Wilderness, shall undergo Peril from you and your Fathers, we'll magnify her at any Rate, as it becomes all those who grow rich and fat by her.

To conclude Sir, let me advise you to publish no more in Defence of that obsolete Doctrine of the *Spirituality* of the Law of *Moses* ; and remember that I have favourably, yea, too tenderly treated you for your ill Usage of the *Clergy*. If you vent any more scurrilous Reflections on them for Want of Learning and Orthodoxy, you must expect to be handled with more Sharpness and Severity.

I don't conceal my Name from you, thro' any Apprehensions I am under of your acute Reply to my Disreputation and Dishonour ; neither would I value it of a Rush
on

on that Account, if you knew who I am. But the Reason why I chuse to be concealed is downright Modesty, not only to avoid the Applauses, Thanks and Congratulations of the Clergy, and the Two Universities for this *good Service* done to the Church; but to take off all Suspicions of ambitious Aims at Preferment in Recompence for it. Was I publickly known, no doubt, but Dr. *Bennet* and Dr. *Frankland*, of whom I have made honourable Mention, would be profuse in their Promises to me against the Time of their being made Bishops; and it is not impossible but the Bishop of *Bangor* might make me his Chaplain, for which I should not be thought, in the Opinion of his Lordship, the less qualified for Want of Acquaintance with the Fathers, so long as I had Learning enough to see to the Examination of a *Welch Levite* according to the Canon. But as I had no such worldly Ends in View upon the Publication of this Work, so my Reward for it lies in the Comfort and Satisfaction of having done Service to our Holy Mother the Church of *England*, whom you represent as an adulterous Woman, and her Reverend Sons the Clergy as a spurious, illegitimate, ignorant and dull Brood.

So, Sir, leaving you to chew upon this Letter, which will hardly be acceptable to your

your Stomach; I hope you will take Care for the future, to treat our Learned and Orthodox Divines with such Decency and Courtliness of Language as is due to their Reverences; or you must expect a sharper Reproof from,

Your Friend and Servant,

N. N.

F I N I S.

Care
and
and
heir
rper

N.